

THE CHEQUE'S NOT IN THE MAIL

HALIFAX (CUP) - Hundreds of Nova Scotia students are scrambling for emergency loans while the province's financial aid office struggles to process bursary applications.

And students unable to pay tuition fees without the aid cheques are being charged interest on the overdue balance.

"The Nova Scotia Student Aid Programs are in total shambles, and drastically in need of immediate help and serious reform," said Bob Levy, a New Democratic Party member of the provincial legislature whose riding includes Acadia University.

Recent reports indicate indicate that 70 per cent - or some 1250 applications for help - had yet to be processed at the end of February.

But an official at the province's student aid office says those numbers are misleading. Director Eliz-

abeth Ann Macdonald said one third of the forms are filled out incorrectly or lack important information.

Some students inquiring about their money have been told a list of those qualifying for help was lost.

Students in New Brunswick received their cheques by January 15.

Macdonald says processing hundreds of forms is time-consuming and difficult.

"We started late, we had workers out with illnesses at the peak periods, and I cannot stress enough the human component involved in processing the applications. The office of Edmund Morris recently authorized overtime to complete the processing of the bursaries."

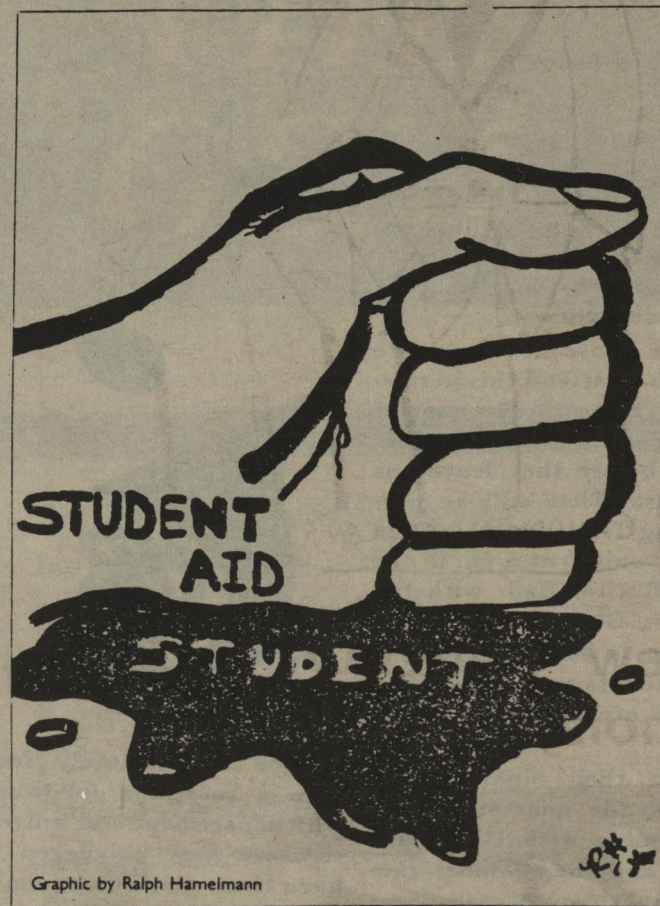
Morris is the newly-installed Minister of Advanced Education and Job Training. He was demoted from the Social Services Ministry in January after a mother on welfare filed and

won a criminal charge accusing him of releasing confidential information from her files.

Morris recently announced the creation of a nine-member provincial Student Aid Advisory Committee. Five students sit on the board.

And the Tory government, which must call an election within the next 18 months, will pump an extra \$1.5 million into the provincial student aid budget. The bulk of that money will go to upping the maximum bursary to \$2000 from \$1700. The change has already met with criticism.

According to Geoff Stone, the leader of the province's Young New Democrats, the average bursary over the past five years has decreased by \$36. Average loans have increased by just over \$1000.



Graphic by Ralph Hamelmann

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